(b) The steps taken by the Government to counteract the adverse media coverage and to promote tourism in the country include reassurance campaigns in overseas markets, consumer advertising, holding of travel marts etc: In the case of Himachal Pradesh, publicity material covering various places of tourist interest in that State have also been brought out.

1318. [*Transferred to the 7th August*, 1986].

Issue of Passports

1319. DR. MOHD. HASHIM KIDWAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of passports issued by the different Regional Passport Offices during the period from January, 1985 to June, 1986;

(b) the number of applications received and the number of passports issued during that last six months and the time taken in the issue of passports; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take for the speedy disposal of the passport applications?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN): (a) 17,49,701 passports were issued by the different Passport Offices during the period from January, 1985 to June, 1986.

(b) 6,23,795 applications for passport were received by different Passport Offices during last six months and 6,59,832 passports were issued by them during the same period. Generally passports are issued within a period of 7 days after receipt of police clearance reports from the concerned authorities. The overall time taken in issue of passports range from 60 to 90 days.

(c) All Passport Officers have been directed to issue passports with in a week after receipt of clearance reports from the police authorities. If the reports are not received within a period of 45 days the passport authorities have been instructed to remind the police authorities periodically to expedite police clearance report in respect of passport applications. The Director General of Police in each State is also being requested separately to issue suitable instructions to the District Police Authorities in the matter. The Government plans to computerize the major Passport Offices by the end of the current financial year. The first phase includes Passport Offices at Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Cochin. This should alo help in streamlining the processing of passport applications.

Popularity of TV Magazine Programmes abroad

1320. SHRI KAPIL VERMA: Will he Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) how popular is the weekly TV magazine programmes sent to our diplomatic missions abroad; and

(b) what is the reaction of our Ambassadors and the people of the countries to which it is shown?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K.R. NARAYANAN): (a) and (b) The "India Magazine" TV capsules have proved most useful in projecting a positive image of India. These TV programmes have been widely welcomed by our missions abroad. These are being extensively used by most Indian ethnic TV stations in USA and Canada. Strips from "India Magazine" are also being used by National Television Stations in a number of countries for viewing by their public. The "India Magazine" programmes are also being lent by our Missions abroad to individuals, cultural organisations, and educational institutions.